

Pat Hutchings FRZS 2005



Figure 1. Pat Hutchings FRZS (left) searches for invertebrates in a sieve held by Harry Recher FRZS (right) in Careel Bay, Pittwater, NSW. Photo: Dan Lunney, February 1972.

From time to time, the Council of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW elects a fellow on the basis of his or her contribution to the science of zoology or his or her contribution to the Society. In mid-2005, the Council voted to elect Pat Hutchings as a Fellow, with the award to be presented at the AGM of the RZS on 22 October 2005. This award has been made on the basis of the major contribution Pat Hutchings has made to both science and to the Society. On both measures, her involvement has been outstanding.

My memory covers the period from shortly after Pat joined the Australian Museum in 1970 to the present. At that early stage, Pat began work with Harry Recher FRZS, who then worked at the Museum and had invited me to participate in littoral field work around the Hawkesbury River. In fact, we were all members of what was then the Littoral Society of NSW. One of my favourite photos is of Pat Hutchings and Harry Recher sieving for invertebrates at Careel Bay, and those data became part of what turned out to be Pat's 4th scientific paper (see figure 1). She now has 246 publications, a figure which attests to a tireless pursuit of science. Her devotion to polychaetes in particular, and conservation of the marine environment generally, has been extraordinary. The appendix to this award, which contains a selection of Pat's papers, shows the range, depth and commitment of her scientific work as well as her consistent advocacy

of conservation, which extends way beyond her special group of organisms. Also, it must be mentioned that Pat has helped produce some excellent students who have subsequently occupied significant positions in Australian institutions. Without a doubt, Pat is a world-class scientist and conservation advocate. The award of a DSc in 1989, and her continued employment as a Principal Research Scientist at the Australian Museum, again bear testimony to her sustained contribution.

Our working lives have continued to intersect, and in recent years it has been on the Council of the RZS. After three years as President, Pat is now the Senior Vice President, and in that role she supports the incoming President. Not only did the society flourish during those three years under her presidency (2001-4), but it is now in great shape to continue. That sustained contribution has earned Pat the second element in this award, namely having made a major contribution to the Society. Without the long-term thoughtful contribution of such people, societies wither rapidly. They are sustained only by genuine commitment and the insight to see where to be relevant and how to be effective as a non-government organisation. Pat has played a leading role in two of the major publications of the RZS, and is noted both as an author who delivers copy on time and a tireless co-editor who delivers manuscripts on time.

In her long scientific career in Australia, now 35 years, Pat has worked on a group of animals that, to her, are critical to the world in which we live. Words like polychaetes, mangroves, Great Barrier Reef, conservation of invertebrates and marine pollution are part of her daily working vocabulary. In these many research disciplines, Pat has impressed many scientists in universities, government departments and NGOs with her knowledge, her willingness to share her ideas and findings, and her determination to produce outcomes that materially enhance the enterprise in which she is engaged. An example of the reach of her science can be seen in the number of committees on which she has served, including the NSW Scientific Committee from 1996-2002, member of the Editorial Faunal Board of Australian Bureau of Flora and Fauna from 1987-1992; member of Scientific Working Committee on Ballast Water Introductions 1989-1994; member of Scientific Advisory Committee to

Bicentennial Park, Sydney 1996-2000; and member of the Consultative Committee of GBRMPA - for Biodiversity and World Heritage 2000 - to the present.

In a similar vein, Pat has played a major role in other societies, such as immediate Past President of the Australian Coral Reef Society, Councillor of the Australian Marine Sciences Association, Vice President of the Coast and Wetlands Society, member of the Advisory Committee of Marine and Coastal Network (NSW) and Councillor of the International Polychaete Association.

In short, Pat Hutchings has more than earned the award of Fellow of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW, and the council unhesitatingly voted to offer her that award. For those of us working alongside Pat, it is gratifying to see lifelong effort in our common cause rewarded.

Dan Lunney FRZS and council member
(23 October 2005)

Selected publications illustrating the diverse interests of Pat Hutchings

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